

TOP SECRET RUFF UMBRA

SYRIA: Terrorism and SAMs. (U)

(S/NF) The 27 December terrorist attacks against El Al offices in Rome and Vienna have outraged Israel, which will probably retaliate, possibly in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley; but both Syria and Israel will most likely try to avoid an armed confrontation.

(C) The attacks have been blamed on the Palestinians, although, according to Israeli Defense Minister Rabin, the responsible organization has yet to be identified.

COMMENT: (S/NF) Since the 19 November shoot down of two Syrian MiG-23/FLOGGERS by Israel as well as Syria's deployment of SA-2/GUIDELINES to the Syrian-Lebanon border and rotation of SA-6/GAINFULs and SA-8/GECKOs into Lebanon, Israel has carefully avoided a military confrontation. Israeli flight routes over Lebanon have been shifted to the west, and Tel Aviv has tried to play down any rumors of a military escalation. The Rome and Vienna terrorist attacks, however, make likely an Israeli retaliatory strike, possibly in the Bekaa Valley, where major terrorist bases are located, according to a 22 December statement by Rabin. Since Israel will not allow the recently deployed Syrian SAMs to inhibit an Israeli retaliatory strike against terrorist targets, both Israel and Syria may be drawn into a fight neither desires.

(S/NF) Syria, while seeking to restrict Israeli flight activity over Lebanon, has also carefully sought to avoid a fight with Israel. In a 26 December message to the UN, Damascus stressed its right to "defend" its troops in Lebanon as well as Syrian airspace.

(S/NF) If Israel decides to strike a terrorist base in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, it will most likely try to minimize the risk of a confrontation with the Syrians while satisfying Israeli domestic pressure for revenge for the 27 December attacks. Syria will also have to respond carefully, since any SAM firing at Israeli aircraft will certainly trigger Israeli attacks, which could lead to the elimination of all Syrian SAM sites along the Syrian-Lebanese border. (DECL OADR)

Prepared by:

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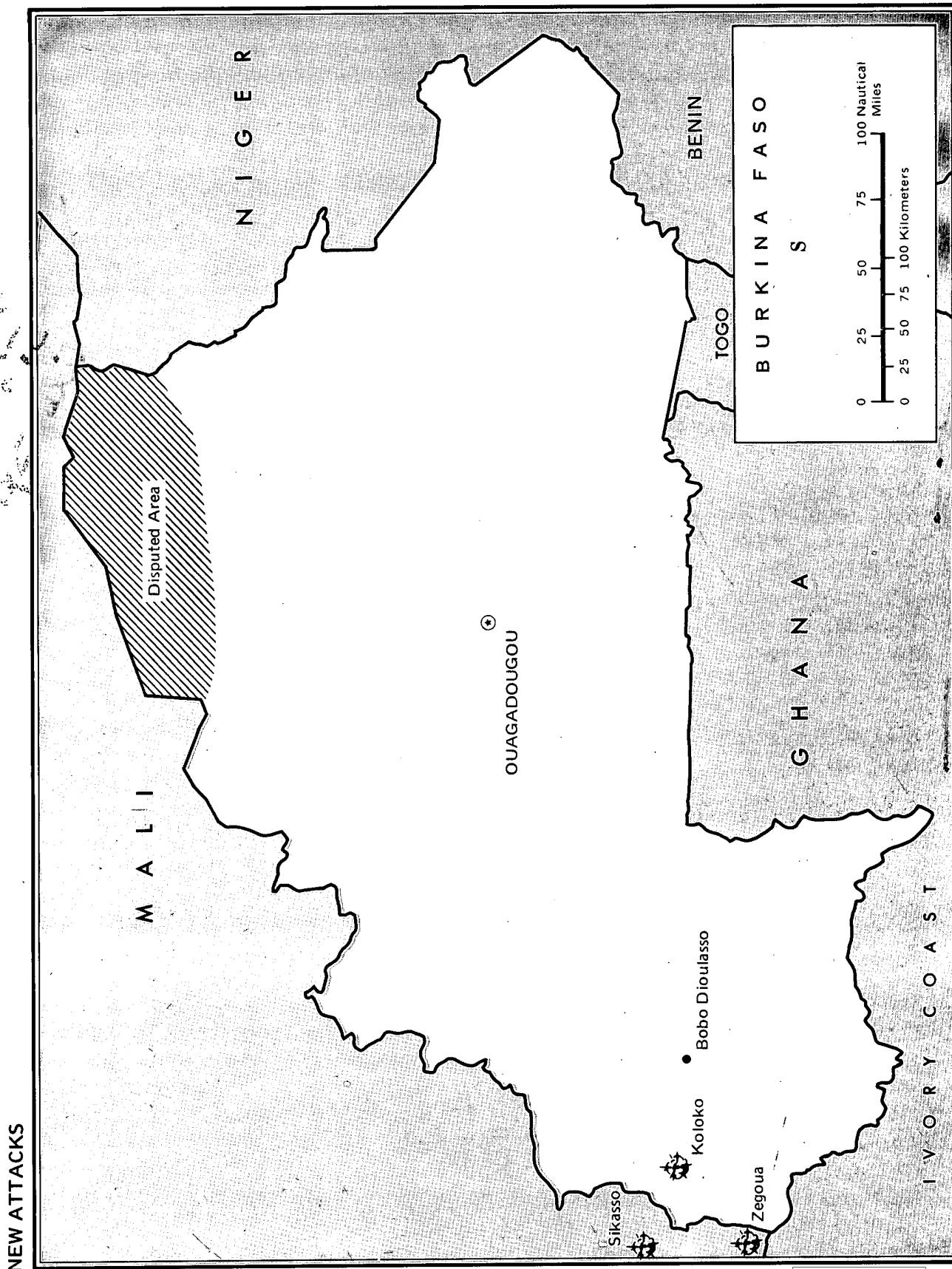
HANDLE VIA

CONTROL SYSTEMS JOINTLY

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DIA review completed.

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NEW ATTACKS

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